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DEPARTMENT BEGINS SEARCH FOR GREEN RIBBON SCHOOLS

Vermont has many schools that have learned how to save energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to nourish health and fitness awareness among students and staff, and to promote environmental literacy. Sustainability education and the awareness of “green” careers are growing and now schools will have the chance to be nationally recognized for their work.

The Vermont Department of Education has joined the National Green Ribbon Schools (GRS) Program, piloted last year by the U.S. Department of Education (US ED). As a result, the Department has begun a statewide search for outstanding green and healthy schools. You can read more about the program and view the application online: http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/green_ribbon.html.

Environmental and sustainability education involves learning about the natural environment, society, and the economy, and ties together how people’s actions are critical to the health of all three. The GRS program seeks to highlight schools across the nation that are working every day to set a great example by saving energy and reducing operating costs, creating environmentally friendly learning spaces, promoting student health, and providing environmental education to incorporate sustainability into the curriculum.

To be considered for the GRS program, a school will have achieved or made considerable progress toward the three pillars established in the program: 1) energy efficient buildings; 2) healthy students and school environment; and 3) environmental literacy of all students. The combined achievement in these three areas will be the basis for the Green Ribbon Schools award.

“Vermont is a leader in environmental awareness and in giving our children the tools they need to build a more sustainable future. We are pleased that our schools have an opportunity to be nationally-recognized for their efforts to create a cleaner, greener and healthier planet,” said Commissioner Armando Vilaseca.

The Department will release the on-line application form this week, and interested schools should notify the department of their intent to apply. Schools will be matched with a volunteer with expertise in “green” practices to help the school complete their application and to submit to the Department for review by November 30, 2012. Public and private schools are eligible for the honor; the Department is authorized to nominate up to three public schools and one private school to US ED for the 2013 Green Ribbon designation.

Honorees will be announced next spring, additionally US ED plans to host a national recognition award ceremony in Washington D.C. in late spring 2013. For more information, contact Cathy Hilgendorf, Vermont Green Ribbon Schools Program Director, at (802) 828-5402 or cathy.hilgendorf@state.vt.us.

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